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Attorneys for Plaintiffs



UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

VIOLETTA HOANG, LIVIA HSIAO, and MICHAEL BLACKSBURG individually and on behalf of a class of similarly situated persons Plaintiffs, VS. REUNION.COM, INC., a California corporation, Defendant.

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COMPLAINT FOR DAMAGES AND COMPLAINT FOR CO INJUNCTIVE RELIEF

CLASS ACTION

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

COMPLAINT

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Plaintiffs Violetta Hoang, Livia Hsiao, and Michael Blacksburg bring this action on behalf of themselves and all similarly-situated individuals and allege as follows:

INTRODUCTION

- 1. In enacting Section 17529.5, the California Legislature found: The increase in spam is not only an annoyance but is also an increasing drain on corporate budgets and possibly a threat to the continued usefulness of the most successful tool of the computer age. . . . Like junk faxes, spam imposes a cost on users, using up valuable storage space in e-mail inboxes ... and discourages people from using e-mail. . . . Like traditional paper 'junk' mail, spam can be annoying and waste time, but it also causes many additional problems because it is easy and inexpensive to create, but difficult and costly to eliminate. . . . The true beneficiaries of spam are the advertisers who benefit from the marketing derived from the advertisements. (Cal. Bus. & Prof. C. §17529.)
- 2. The allegations contained herein and relating to the false and deceptive email marketing practices of Reunion.com, Inc. ("Reunion.com") paint the very picture of the harm that 17529 was intended to address: The use by an advertiser of false and deceptive email headers and subject lines to deceive Internet users into reading unsolicited commercial emails that such users would otherwise toss in their virtual trash.
- 3. Reunion.com operates an Internet-based social networking website. Reunion.com advertises itself as the leading social networking service for grown-ups to reconnect and keep in touch with family, friends, lost loves and colleagues.
- 4. During or prior to the spring of 2008, Reunion.com initiated an email marketing campaign designed to boost Reunion.com's membership. The campaign consists of emails (the "Emails") sent by Reunion.com but appearing to come from individual Reunion.com registered members. Each Email contains a subject line stating "Please Connect With Me :-)", or "[Member Name] Wants to Connect with You", or something substantially similar, with no reference to Reunion.com. The body text of each Email states, "I looked for you on Reunion.com, but you weren't there. Please connect with me so we can keep in touch," or something substantially similar, even

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though in most or all cases no such search has been conducted.

- 5. The Emails, as received by Plaintiffs Violetta Hoang, Livia Hsiao, Michael Blacksburg and others similarly situated, violate California Business and Professions Code Section 17529.5(a)(2) and (a)(3), in that each Email: (i) contains falsified, misrepresented and/or forged header information in the "From" line, which falsely represents that the Email has been sent from an individual, rather than from Reunion.com; and (ii) contains a subject line that Reunion.com knows would be likely to mislead a recipient acting reasonably under the circumstances into believing that the Email is a personal request to connect with an individual, rather than an unsolicited commercial email advertisement from Reunion.com.
- 6. On information and belief, many of the Emails, such as those received by Plaintiff Blacksburg, also violate Section 17529.5(a)(1), in that they are deceptively accompanied in the "From" lines by a third-party's domain name without the permission of that third party.
- 7. Taken as a whole, the Emails represent a clear attempt by Reunion.com to disguise the fact that the Emails are unsolicited commercial email advertisements, and to deceive recipients into opening the Emails on the mistaken belief that they are personal requests by one individual to "connect" with them. On information and belief, Reunion.com has sent, and continues to send, millions of the Emails in the regular course of its business, resulting in this Complaint and accompanying requests for damages and injunctive relief.

PARTIES

- 8. Reunion.com, Inc. is a Delaware corporation, registered to conduct business in California. On information and belief Reunion.com maintains its headquarters at 2118 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90403.
- 9. Plaintiff Violetta Hoang ("Hoang") is an individual who resides in San Francisco, California.

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10. Plaintiff Livia Hsiao ("Hsiao") is an individual who resides in Foster City,

California.

11. Plaintiff Michael Blacksburg ("Blacksburg") is an individual who resides in San Francisco, California.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- 12. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §1332(d) because the amount in controversy in this matter exceeds the sum or value of \$5,000,000 exclusive of interest and costs, and this matter is a class action in which a member of the class of plaintiffs is a citizen of a state different from the Defendant, and less than two-thirds of the members of the proposed plaintiff classes in the aggregate are citizens of California.
- 13. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Reunion.com because Reunion.com is registered with the California Secretary of State to conduct business within California, maintains its headquarters and employees within California, and conducts substantial business within California, such that Reunion.com has significant continuous and pervasive contacts with the State of California.
- 14. Venue is proper in this Court because Plaintiffs Hoang and Blacksburg reside in San Francisco, California. Furthermore, Reunion.com's User Agreement contains a forum selection clause specifying "venue in the federal and state courts located in San Francisco County, California, U.S.A. in all disputes arising out of or relating to the Service."

INTRADISTRICT ASSIGNMENT

15. Pursuant to Local Rule 3-5(b) and 3-2(c), this action should be assigned to the San Francisco division of the Northern District of California, because Plaintiffs Hoang and Blacksburg reside in San Francisco, and because the forum selection clause contained in Reunion.com's User Agreement specifies San Francisco as the appropriate venue.

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GENERAL ALLEGATIONS

Reunion.com's Business Practices and the Emails

- 16. Reunion.com operates a social networking Internet website. The Reunion.com website allows members to search for old friends, classmates, and colleagues. A member of the Reunion.com Website can add other members to his or her "Friends" list, thereby creating a social network of Reunion.com members.
- 17. Reunion.com boasts that it has more than 32 million registered members, a number that it claims is increasing by one million members a month.
- 18. In order to become a registered member of Reunion.com, a person must provide his or her first name, last name, email address, gender and date of birth. Additionally, Reunion.com asks registered members to provide the password to the registered member's email account. ...
- 19. Where provided, Reunion.com uses the registered member's email password to access the registered member's email contacts. As set forth in Reunion.com's Privacy Policy, Reunion.com purports to access the registered member's contacts for the purpose of sending emails "from Reunion.com" to certain or all of those contacts and "inviting them to join" Reunion.com.
- 20. The emails sent by Reunion.com to registered members' email contacts (as defined above, the "Emails"), however, are disguised so as not to appear to come from Reunion.com, but from registered members personally, in that registered members? names appear in the Emails' "From" lines. In some cases, the "From" lines also contain registered members' personal email addresses, including the domain names of the registered members' email services providers, and, on information and belief, without any authorization from such email services providers.
- Furthermore, the subject lines of the Emails do not invite recipient contacts to join Reunion.com. Instead, they state, "Please Connect with Me :-)", or "[Member Name] Wants to Connect with You", or something substantially similar, with neither any reference to Reunion.com nor any indication that that the message contains an

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- 22. Additionally, the body text of the Emails states, "I looked for you on Reunion.com, but you weren't there. Please connect with me so we can keep in touch," or something substantially similar, even though Reunion.com's registration procedure does not provide for such searches, and in most or all cases no such searches have been conducted.
- 23. The Emails' headers and subject lines create the deception of a personal request from the registered member to "connect" with the recipient, rather than an unsolicited commercial email advertisement sent from Reunion.com. That deception is intended by Reunion.com to encourage recipients to open and read the Emails, when recipients might otherwise ignore the Emails as one more piece of unsolicited commercial email advertising.

Emails Received by Plaintiff Hoang

24. On or around May 5, 2008 Plaintiff Violetta Hoang received an Email (the "Hoang Email") from Reunion.com that appeared to have been sent by a former professor, Troung Tran. A graphical depiction of the Hoang Email appears below:

From: Truong Tran <verify@relay05.reunion.com>

Date: Mon, May 5, 2008 at 6:41 PM

Subject: Truong wants to connect with you!

To: REDACTED @gmail.com

Hi,

I looked for you on Reunion.com, but you weren't there. I use Reunion.com to search for lost friends and contacts, and to stay connected with people I know, so please connect with me.

-Truong

RESPOND TO TRUONG:

Connect with Truong Now! - You'll also find out if anyone else is searching for you.

Or go to http://www.reunion.com/showInviteRegistration.do?uld=258485053

Error! Filename not specified.

Reunion.com - Life Changes. Keep in Touch.™ You have received this emall because a Reunion.com Member sent an invitation to this email address. For assistance, please refer to our FAO or Contact Us. Our Address: 2118 Wilshire Blvd., Box 1008, Santa Monica, CA 90403-5784

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	25.	The "From" line of the Hoang Email was false and/or misrepresentative
becau	ise it cr	reated the deception that the Hoang Email was from Tran Truong and not
from F	Reunior	n.com.
	26	The subject line of the Hoang Email was false and/or misleading because it

The subject line of the Hoang Email was false and/or misleading because it created the deception that the Hoang Email was a personal request by Truong to connect with Hoang, and not an unsolicited commercial email advertisement from Reunion.com.

Emails Received by Plaintiff Hsiao

27. On or around May 5, 2008 Plaintiff Livia Hsiao received three Emails (collectively, the "Hsiao Emails") from Reunion.com that appeared to have been sent from, respectively, friends Esther Kang, Vivian Yeh, and Andrea Wong. Graphical depictions of the Hsiao Emails appear below:

From: Esther Kang <verify@relav05.reunion.com> Date: Mon. May 5, 2008 at 8:46 PM Subject: Esther wants to connect with you! To: REDACTED lemail.com

Hi,

I looked for you on Reunion.com, but you weren't there. I use Reunion.com to search for lost friends and contacts, and to stay connected with people I know, so please connect with me.

-Esther

RESPOND TO ESTHER:

Connect with Esther Now! - You'll also find out if anyone else is searching for you.

Or go to http://www.reunion.com/showInviteRegistration.do?uid=258498145

Error! Filename not specified.

Reunion.com - Life Changes. Keep in Touch.™ You have received this email because a Reunion.com Member sent an invitation to this email address. For assistance, please refer to our $\underline{\sf FAQ}$ or $\underline{\sf Contact\ Us}$. Our Address: 2118 Wilshire Blvd., Box 1008, Santa Monica, CA 90403-5784

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From: Vivian Yeh < verify@relay05.reunion.com>	_					
Date: Mon, May 5, 2008 at 8:56 PM						
Subject: Vivian wants to connect with you!						
To: Redacted @gmail.com						
Hi,						
I looked for you on Reunion.com, but you weren't there. I use for lost friends and contacts, and to stay connected with people connect with me.						
—Vivian						
RESPOND TO VIVIAN: Connect with Vivian Now! - You'll also find out if anyone else is	searching for you.					
Or go to http://www.reunion.com/showInviteReaistration.do?u	id=258500422					
Error! Filename not specified. Reunion.com - Life Changes. Keep in Touch. ** You have received this email because a Reunion.com Member sent an invitation this email address. For assistance, please refer to our FAQ or Contact Us. Our Address: 2118 Wilshire Blvd., Box 1008, Santa Monica, CA 90403-5784						

From: Andrea W	/ong < <u>verify@relav05.reunion.com</u> >						
Date: Mon. May 5, 2008 at 10:06 PM							
Subject: Andrea v	Subject: Andrea wants to connect with you!						
To Redacted @g	Redacted @gmail.com						
Hi	i,						
fo	looked for you on Reunion.com, but you weren't there. I use Reunion.com to search r lost friends and contacts, and to stay connected with people I know, so please onnect with me.						
_	Andrea						
	ESPOND TO ANDREA: connect with Andrea Now! - You'll also find out if anyone else is searching for you.						
Or	r go to http://www.reunion.com/showInviteRegistration.do?uid=229123621						
Re Yo thi	rror! Filename not specified. sunion.com - Life Changes. Keep in Touch. u have received this email because a Reunion.com Member sent an invitation to is email address. For assistance, please refer to our <u>FAQ</u> or <u>Contact Us</u> . ur Address: 2118 Wilshire Blvd., Box 1008, Santa Monica, CA 90403-5784						

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28.	The "From" lines of the Hsiao Emails were false and/or misrepresentative
because the	ey created the deception that the Hsiao Emails were from Kang, Yeh and
Wong, and r	not from Reunion.com.

29. The subject lines of the Hsiao Emails were false and/or misleading because they created the deception that the Hsiao Emails were personal requests by Kang, Yeh and Wong to connect with Hsiao, and not unsolicited commercial email advertisements from Reunion.com.

Email Received by Plaintiff Blacksburg

- 30. On or around July 17, 2008 Plaintiff Michael Blacksburg received an Email (the "Blacksburg Email") from Reunion.com that appeared to have been sent by Erick member of a Google electronic mailing list FOOLD@GOOGLEGROUPS.COM. An electronic mailing list is comprised of a program that enables a person to subscribe to a list by supplying his or her email address. Thereafter, any subscriber may send an email to a single email address (often referred to as a "reflector"), and the electronic email address program re-sends that email to all of the other subscribers on the list. An electronic mailing list is not a natural person.
- A graphical depiction of the Blacksburg Email, along with the reflector, 31. FOOLD@GOOGLEGROUP.S.COM, appear below:

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On Thu, 7/17/08, Erick Dunn Redacted @yahoo.com wrote: From: Erick Dunn Redacted @yahoo.com Subject: [Fool'd] Please connect with me:) To: foold@googlegroups.com Date: Thursday, July 17, 2008, 11:45 AM
I looked for you on Reunion.com, but you weren't there. Please connect with me so we can keep in touch.
Do you know Erick?
Yes
Tell us, and see who's searching for you!
Reunion.com - Find Everyone from Your Past. TM You have received this small because a Reunion.com Member sent an invitation to this email address. For assistance, plasse refer to our FAQ or Contact Us. Our Address 2118 Wilestire Blvd. Box 1986, Santa Monica, C4 90403-5784
Post: foold@googlegroups.com Unsubscribe: foold-unsubscribe@googlegroups.com Visit: http://groups.google.com/group/foold?hl=en

- 32. The Blacksburg Email was sent to the entire electronic mailing list membership because the mailing list address was listed as one of Dunn's email contacts.
- "From" line of the Blacksburg Email was misrepresentative because it created the deception that the Blacksburg Email was from Dunn and not from Reunion.com. In addition, on information and belief, the Blacksburg Email was deceptively accompanied by and/or contained a third party's domain name, "yahoo.com", without the permission of that third party.
- 34. The subject line of the Blacksburg Email was false and/or misleading because it created the deception that the Blacksburg Email was a personal request by Dunn to connect with Blacksburg, and not an unsolicited commercial email advertisement from Reunion.com.

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- 35. Pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23, Plaintiffs Hoang, Hsiao and Blacksburg bring this action on their own behalf and as representatives of all individuals who, at a time they were not registered members of Reunion.com, received one or more Emails from the date three years prior to the filing of this action up to and including the date of final judgment ("the Class").
- 36. Pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23 (c) (5), Plaintiff Blacksburg brings this action on his own behalf and as a representative of all individuals who, at a time they were not registered members of Reunion.com, received one or more Emails that specified in the "From" line a non-Reunion.com domain name from the date three years prior to the filing of this action up to and including the date of final judgment ("the Third Party Domain Subclass" or "Subclass").
- 37. A class action is proper under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23 because: a) the Class and Subclass are so numerous that joinder of all members is impracticable, b) there are questions of law and fact that are common to the Class and Subclass, c) the claims of the representative Plaintiffs are typical of the claims of the Class and Subclass, and the representative Plaintiffs will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the Class and Subclass. A class action is the superior method of adjudicating this controversy because under Rule 23(b)(3), questions of law and fact common to the Class and Subclass members predominate over any question affecting only individual members.
 - 38. The common questions of law and fact include:
 - Whether Reunion.com advertised in the Emails within the meaning of Cal. Bus. & Prof. C. §§17529.1 and 17529.5; 273000
 - Whether the Emails were sent from California and/or sent to California electronic mail addresses, within the meaning of Cal. Bus. & Prof. C. §§17529.5(a);
 - Whether the Emails constitute unsolicited commercial email

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- advertisements within the meaning of Cal. Bus. & Prof. C. §§17529.1(c) & (o);
- Whether the Emails contain falsified, misrepresented and/or forged header information in violation of California Business and Professions Code Section 17529.5(a)(2);
- Whether the Emails contain a subject line that Reunion.com knows would be likely to mislead a recipient, acting reasonably under the circumstances, about a material fact regarding the contents or subject matter of the message in violation of California Business and Professions Code Section 17529.5(a)(3); and
- Whether the Emails that are sent from third party email accounts
 deceptively contain or are accompanied by a third-party's domain
 name without the permission of the third party in violation of
 California Business and Professions Code Section 17529.5(a)(1)
 (on behalf of the Third Party Domain Subclass only).
- 39. Plaintiffs can and will fairly and adequately represent and protect the interests of the Class and Subclass because:
 - All of the questions of law and fact regarding the liability of Reunion.com are common to the Class and Subclass and predominate over any individual issues that may exist, such that by prevailing on their own claims, Plaintiffs will necessarily establish the liability of Reunion.com to all Class and Subclass members;
 - Without the representation provided by Plaintiffs, it is unlikely that any Class or Subclass members would receive legal representation and/or obtain recourse for the misconduct carried out by Reunion.com; and
 - Plaintiffs have retained competent attorneys who are experienced both in the conduct of class actions and the law governing

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unsolicited commercial email advertising. Plaintiffs and their counsel have the necessary resources to litigate this class action. and Plaintiffs and their counsel are aware of their fiduciary responsibility to the Class and Subclass members and are determined to discharge those duties to obtain the best possible recovery for the Class and Subclass.

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

Violation of Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code §17529.5(a)(1) (Brought by Blacksburg, individually and on behalf of the Third Party Domain Subclass)

- 40. Plaintiffs incorporate by reference the allegations of fact set forth in the paragraphs 1 through 39.
- 41. Blacksburg and each member of the Third Party Domain Subclass were recipients of unsolicited commercial email advertisements sent by Reunion.com, referred to herein as the "Emails" during the relevant time period. On information and belief, the Emails were either sent from California and/or sent to California electronic mail addresses.
- 42. The Emails received by Blacksburg and the members of the Third Party Domain Subclass deceptively contained or were accompanied by third-party domain names without the permission of the third parties. To wit, the "From" line of the Emails received by Blacksburg and members of the Third Party Domain Subclass contained an individual email address incorporating a third-party domain name, creating the deception that the Email was from the individual user of that email address and/or the third party and not from Reunion.com.
- On information and belief, the Emails received by Blacksburg and the 43. members of the Third Party Domain Subclass were sent without the permission of the third party whose domain name appeared in the "From" line.

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44. Reunion.com's deceptive conduct entitles Blacksburg and each member of the Third Party Domain Subclass to liquidated damages of one thousand dollars for each unsolicited commercial email advertisement transmitted in violation of Cal. Bus. & Prof. C. §17529.5 as that term is defined in Cal. Bus. & Prof. C. §17529.1.

SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION

Violation of Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code §17529.5(a)(2) (Brought by Hoang, Hsiao and Blacksburg, individually and on behalf of the Class)

- 45. Plaintiffs incorporate by reference the allegations of fact set forth in the paragraphs 1 through 44.
- Hoang, Hsiao, and Blacksburg, and each member of the Class, were 46. recipients of unsolicited commercial email advertisements sent by Reunion.com, referred to herein as the "Emails."
- 47. On information and belief, the Emails were either sent from California and/or sent to California electronic mail addresses.
- 48. The Emails contained or were accompanied by falsified, misrepresented, or forged header information. To wit, the Emails contained falsified, misrepresented and/or forged header information in the "From" line, which falsely represented that the Email had been sent from an individual, rather than from Reunion.com.
- 49. Reunion.com's conduct entitles Plaintiffs and the Class to liquidated damages of one thousand dollars for each unsolicited commercial email advertisement transmitted in violation of Cal. Bus. & Prof. C. §17529.5 as that term is defined in Cal. Bus. & Prof. C. §17529.1.

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THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION

Violation of Cal. Bus. & Prof. Code §17529.5(a)(3)

(Brought by Hoang, Hsiao and Blacksburg,

individually and on behalf of the Class)

- 50. Plaintiffs incorporate by reference the allegations of fact set forth in the paragraphs 1 through 49.
- 51. Hoang, Hsiao and Blacksburg, and each member of the Class, were recipients of unsolicited commercial email advertisements sent by Reunion.com, referred to herein as the "Emails."
- 52. On information and belief, the Emails were either sent from California and/or sent to California electronic mail addresses.
- 53. The Emails contained subject lines that Reunion.com knew were likely to mislead the recipients, acting reasonably under the circumstances, about a material fact regarding the contents of the subject matter of the messages. To wit, each Email contained a subject line stating "Please Connect With Me :-)", or "[Member Name] Wants to Connect with You", or something substantially similar, with no reference to Reunion.com. Reunion.com knew these subject lines would be likely to mislead a recipient acting reasonably under the circumstances into believing that the Email was a personal request to connect with an individual, rather than an unsolicited commercial email advertisement from Reunion.com.
- 54. Reunion.com's conduct entitles Plaintiffs and the Class to actual damages and/or liquidated damages of one thousand dollars for each unsolicited commercial email advertisement transmitted in violation of Cal. Bus. & Prof. C. §17529.5, , as that term is defined in Cal. Bus. & Prof. C. §17529.1.

PRAYER

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs respectfully request judgment as follows:

1. That the Court enter a judgment against Reunion.com that it has:

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- b. Violated Cal. Bus. Cal. Bus. & Prof. C. §17529.5(a)(2) and (a)(3) as to Plaintiffs Hoang, Hsiao, Blacksburg and members of the Class;
- That the Court enter a preliminary and permanent injunction enjoining Reunion.com and its agents, employees, representatives, and successors and predecessors in interest from:
 - a. Engaging in violations of Cal. Bus. & Prof. C. §17529.5, or otherwise sending false, deceptive, or misleading emails.
- 3. That the Court order Reunion.com to pay Plaintiffs' and the Class members' as follows:
 - a. Statutory damages in the amount of \$1000 per each email advertisement received by members of the Recipient Class pursuant to Cal. Bus. & Prof. C. §17529.5;
 - b. Plaintiffs' costs and attorneys' fees incurred by Plaintiffs in prosecuting this action, pursuant to Cal. Bus. & Prof. C. §17529.5;
 - c. Interest, including prejudgment interest, on the foregoing sums;
- 4. That the Court grant to Plaintiffs such additional relief as is just and proper.

DATED: July <u>23</u>, 2008

KRONENBERGER BURGOYNE, LLP

By:

Henry M. Burgoyne 41 Attorneys for Plaintiffs

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	2	REQUEST FOR JURY TRIAL										
	3	Plaintiffs hereby demand a trial of this action by jury.										
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	5											
	6	DATED: July, 2008 KRONENBERGER BURGOYNE, LLP										
	7											
	8	D.II.										
	9	By: Henry M. Burgoyne, III Attorneys for Plaintiffs										
	10	Attorneys for Plaintiffs										
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COMPLAINT